

IN[↑] NEXT LEVEL

Philippians
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SESSION 1: Where We're Going (1:1-11)

Opening Thoughts

- Philippians is a call to *cruciformity*...
- What do we find in 1:1-11?
 - o On the one hand, nothing spectacular here...
 - o On the other hand, hints of what's to come...

Paul Starts with the Gospel

- "Grace and peace" – the gospel in brief
- The gospel changes people...
 - o Love
 - o Wisdom / Knowledge
 - o Joy

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Why do you want to study Philippians? What are you hoping to receive from this?
2. What about Philippians 1:1-11 confirms what you know about Paul? Anything surprise you? If you're new to this, what do we learn about this person from these few verses?
3. How would you define the "the gospel"? What does Paul not include here that is important? How does what Paul says here sharpen (or correct) what you would say?
4. Do you believe the gospel changes people? Why or why not?
5. Which of the three changes mentioned here are most desirable to you? Why?

SESSION 2: Hardships in Gospel Perspective (1:12-30)

Setting the (Historical) Context

- Paul's Situation –
- Life (as a Christian) in Philippi –
 - Strategic Location
 - Patriotic Spirit
 - Persecution?

Philippians 1:12-30

- The gospel changes our perspective on hardships.
 - Paul seems fine. Why?
 - If the gospel is doing well...
 - Because the gospel is about...
 - And Jesus brings...
- Paul invites the Philippians to...

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. What in your life could you genuinely complain about right now?
2. What are some of the obstacles Paul is currently facing? What is his attitude toward these things? What enables him to see things as he does?
3. What all do you think is meant by “to live is Christ and to die is gain”? Could you say that? Why or why not?
4. What would it take for you to become capable of not only accepting but rejoicing in suffering?

SESSION 3: Cruciformity Manifested in Christ (2:1-11)

Opening Thoughts

- Philippians 2:1-11 is...
 - The most written about text in the Bible. Why?
 - The heart of this “call to cruciformity”
- Never forget the two halves of the gospel:
 - Jesus is the Savior who...
 - Jesus is the Lord who...

Understanding Philippians 2:1-11

- Our actions are rooted in a certain mindset...
 - Action-Mindset #1:
 - Action-Mindset #2:
- And this mindset is most clearly revealed in Jesus.
 - Although...
 - Not...
 - But...
 - Because...
 - This is the pattern of cruciformity!
- Some observations:
 - This is not the way our culture operates...
 - This is the secret sauce for much of what we seek...
 - This is not particularly new...

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When you were 16 years old, how selfish were you?
2. What are some examples of the wrong mindset in the world around us?
3. Where do you see traces of this selfish mindset in yourself?
4. What difference would it make in your relationships if you began practicing cruciformity?
5. What tangible thing can you do in the next 48 hours to live out the message of this text?
6. Why is it important to remember the things Paul lists in the opening lines of this passage?

SESSION 4: Cruciformity Modeled in the Church (2:12-30)

Opening Thoughts

- What is Philippians? (A call to...)
- What else have we learned so far?

Studying Philippians 2:12-30

- Part 1 (2:12-18)
 - o When we live like Jesus, we...
 - o How does the Old Testament language deepen this picture?
- Part 2 (2:19-30)
 - o When we live like Jesus, we...
 - o More than just “travel reports” –
 - How does Timothy look like Jesus?
 - How does Epaphroditus look like Jesus?
- We see Jesus *clearly though* in the lives of those in whom he dwells.
 - o So... Pay attention to...
 - o So... Pursue Christlikeness so that...

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How have you seen the idea that “you can’t be what you can’t see” played out in your own experience?
2. Who have been some of the most impactful leaders/teachers/mentors in your life? What have you learned from each of them?
3. Who are some examples of everyday cruciformity that you are prone to miss?
4. If someone examined your life to discover what it means to look like Jesus, how well would that work out for them?

SESSION 5: Why Give Up Everything? (3:1-14)

Opening Thoughts

- Do you believe that life w/ Jesus is better than life w/o him? Why?
- The cost of discipleship is becoming increasingly real. Is it worth it?

What is Paul doing in Philippians 3:1-14

- Telling his story...
- Contrasting old with new...
- Demonstrating the superiority of...

What makes life in Christ so wonderful?

- You enjoy a _____ relationship with the Lord of the universe.
 - “To *know* Christ...”
 - “Christ Jesus *my* Lord...”
- Your _____ before God is not based on religious performance.
 - Let God’s opinion of you define you.
 - Let Christ’s death determine God’s opinion of you.
- Your _____ sufferings anticipate _____ life.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is a product or food or movie that you love so much you’d try to convince someone else to love it too?
2. If someone would have asked you yesterday why you think life with Jesus is better than life without him, what would you have said? How does this text change or deepen your answer?
3. Why is it important to ask and answer this question *to ourselves*?
4. Which of Paul’s three points resonates you most deeply right now? Why?

SESSION 6: Cruciformity in the Real World (3:15-21)

Opening Thoughts

- “The prospering of God’s cause on earth depends upon his people thinking well.”
 - Dallas Willard

- Thinking “cruciformly” – not _____, but _____, because _____.

Weird but Not Alone

- If you do this, you will...

- Why do we so badly need each other (to be examples of Christlikeness)?

Being the Church in the World

- On the world –
 - o “enemies of the cross”
 - o “destiny is destruction; god is stomach; glory is in shame”
 - o “their mind is set on earthly things”

- On the church –
 - o A different calling –
 - o A different future –
 - o A different Lord –

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When in your childhood did you feel most “left out”? How much does that kind of thing bother you? Why?
2. What do you think of Willard’s quote that opened this session? Why is it important that Christians think well?
3. How has being a Christian made you weird in your cultural context? Do you see this dynamic becoming stronger or weaker? (Are we seeming weirder or no?)

4. How can we have a realistic (biblical) view of the world without slipping into an unhelpful “us-vs-them” overly combative mindset?
5. How much do you think about eternal things? How can you think about them more?

SESSION 7: General Instructions (4:1-9)

Opening Thoughts

- Moving toward the end...
- How organized are Paul's thoughts here?

Philippians 4:1-9

- Stand (in light of the Lord's impending return).
 - o Have the same mindset...
 - o Be always...
 - o Show to all...
- Pray .
 - o Anxious? Then...
 - o "And the peace of God..."
- well.
 - o Maybe our prayers feel ineffectual because...
 - o What occupies your mind?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Imagine you have kids, they are heading off to college, and you want to give them some final instructions before they go. What would you say?
2. How organized do you think Paul's thoughts are in Philippians 4:1-9? Is this a planned out conclusion or is he just freestyling?
3. Compare this to the last bits of Colossians (4:1ff) and 1 Thessalonians (5:12ff). What similarities do you see? What differences?
4. Which more desperately needs attention – your prayer life or your thought life? What are you going to do to bring your life in line with these instructions?

SESSION 8: The Secret to Contentment (4:10-23)

Opening Thoughts

- What are some ways you have seen people use Philippians 4:13?
- If you want to understand a statement, read it in context!

Philippians 4:10-23

- If you have Jesus, you have...
 - o This is one of the oddest thank-yous ever!
 - o “Secret to *contentment*” (*autarkēs*) –
 - o The real message of Philippians 4:13 –
- Giving to God is never...
 - o The expectation of “reciprocity” and Paul’s limitation –
 - o This friendship is not just horizontal –
- Paul may be in chains but...

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. If we asked five people who know you whether you were content, what would they say?
2. To what extent are you afraid of failure or disappointment? Why?
3. How does examining Philippians 4:13 in context change your understanding of its message?
4. How does Paul subvert his culture’s ideal of “sufficiency”? What are some values in our world that we should think about in the same way?
5. What difference does this passage make for our understanding of friendship and giving our money for ministry?

6. What will you take with you from our study of Philippians?



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A person is silhouetted against a bright sunset over a body of water, holding a fishing rod. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow. Trees and reeds are visible in the foreground and background.

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